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Published February 2, 2007

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## Jury finds Moy guilty in infant's slaying

Midday update

By Kevin Grasha  
Lansing State Journal

After deliberating for about an hour, a jury this afternoon found Steve Lee Moy guilty of killing his 13-month-old stepdaughter.

The 39-year-old Lansing man was convicted of first-degree felony murder and first-degree child abuse in the Aug. 2, 2006 death of Anishia Moy. He will be sentenced next month to mandatory life in prison.

Steve Moy — who told a police detective he was alone in a house with Anishia the afternoon she died — was the only person who could have killed her, prosecutors said in closing arguments earlier this afternoon. The trial began Monday

The child died from internal injuries caused by blunt force and possible suffocation, according to testimony.

"The defendant unleashed his brutal abuse on this baby," Assistant Prosecutor Bill Crino said.

Pounding his fist in his palm five times, Crino told jurors how he believed Moy caused five deep wounds on the child's scalp.

Moy's attorney, Roderick Porter, focused on the 33 bruises found on Anishia's body, which a forensic pathologist said were days to weeks old.

Anishia's 21-year-old mother, Loretta, testified she never saw any injuries when she bathed her daughter the night before she died, Porter reminded the jury. She also denied knowing anything about fractures in the child's arm and wrist that had healed.

She may have been trying to cover up something, he said.

"This exhibits a complete lack of personal responsibility by Loretta Moy," Porter said.

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Published February 3, 2007

## Jury finds stepdad guilty in tot's death

Deliberations last 1 hour; Moy to get life in prison

By Kevin Grasha  
Lansing State Journal

### What's next

- Steve Lee Moy will be sentenced March 7 to life in prison without the possibility of parole.
- A first-degree felony murder conviction means the murder was committed in the course of another felony; in this case, child abuse.

MASON - Steve Lee Moy killed his 13-month-old stepdaughter, a jury found Friday, bringing to a close a case about a child whose short life was marked by violence.

Jurors deliberated for about an hour before convicting the 39-year-old Lansing man of first-degree felony murder and first-degree child abuse in the Aug. 2, 2006, death of Anishia Moy. He will be sentenced next month to a mandatory life term in prison without parole.

In closing arguments Friday, prosecutors faced a big challenge: overcoming the testimony of a key witness, 21-year-old Loretta Moy, who denied seeing bruises or any injuries on her daughter's body before she died.

That contradicted the testimony of a forensic pathologist who found 33 bruises that he said were days to weeks old. The pathologist also noted two healed fractures in Anishia's arm and wrist.

Assistant Prosecutor Bill Crino said Anishia obviously had been abused and mistreated by someone, but he told jurors to focus on the lethal injuries inflicted Aug. 2.

Anishia died from internal injuries - including five broken ribs and a lacerated liver - caused by blunt force, according to forensic testimony. She also may have been suffocated.

Steve Moy, who told a police detective he was alone with his stepdaughter the afternoon she died, was the only person who could have killed Anishia, Crino said.

"The defendant unleashed his brutal abuse on this baby," Crino said.

As he pounded his fist in his palm five times, Crino told jurors how he believed Moy caused five deep wounds on the child's scalp.

Moy's attorney, Roderick Porter, focused on the old injuries found on Anishia's body.

He reminded jurors that Loretta Moy testified she never saw any bruises when she bathed her daughter the night before she died. She also denied knowing about fractures in the child's arm and wrist that had healed.

"This exhibits a complete lack of personal responsibility by Loretta Moy," Porter said.

During his closing argument, Crino outlined how Moy's story about what happened to Anishia evolved.

- Moy told Loretta's friend, as she performed CPR on Anishia, that the infant had inexplicably stopped breathing about 15 minutes earlier. He didn't explain why he failed to call for help.
- He told a paramedic the child fell off a couch. Later, he said she stopped breathing, so he called 911.
- He told a doctor at Sparrow Hospital he didn't call 911 because there wasn't a telephone in the house. The house had a working telephone, according to testimony.
- He told a Lansing police detective he tried to perform CPR but couldn't revive her. He then put her on a couch because he didn't know what to do.

"Those words are dripping with evidence of the defendant's guilt," Crino said, adding: "We know he was lying about what happened to this child."

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## Mother held in stabbing deaths of kids

February 5, 2007

BY STEVE NEAVLING

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

A Macomb Township woman was jailed Sunday after police say she stabbed to death her two children, three dogs and a pet mouse.

Macomb County Sheriff's Office deputies found the children, ages 5 and 8, stabbed numerous times in their beds.

"It was a gruesome scene," a shaky-voiced Sheriff Mark Hackel said. "Both of the kids looked like they were sleeping at the time, but we won't know for certain until an autopsy is finished."

It's unclear what triggered the attack, which police think occurred Saturday night or early Sunday morning.

A sister of the mother alerted police at 6 p.m. Sunday.

"Her sister went to the mobile home, and she told her that the children were in the back bedroom and that she had hurt them," Hackel said.

Police declined to identify the mother.

Contact **STEVE NEAVLING** at 586-469-4935 or [sneavling@freepress.com](mailto:sneavling@freepress.com).

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## Drug-addicted baby could mean charges

Monday, February 05, 2007

**TOM GILCHRIST**

**THE BAY CITY TIMES**

BAD AXE -- His name is Anthony. Police say he came into the world as a drug addict, fighting withdrawal symptoms since his birth Jan. 17.

Now, his 25-year-old mother could face criminal charges.

"The \$64,000 question is: Can she be prosecuted for having a drug-addicted baby?" said Huron County Prosecutor Mark J. Gaertner.

"We are not finding a statute to hang our hat on, but we're still looking."

Huron County Probate Judge David L. Clabuesch last week allowed the mother, an Owendale resident, to make supervised visits to Anthony, in foster care since doctors released him from a hospital.

Clabuesch could decide at a Wednesday, Feb. 14, hearing whether the mother or the baby's father, who lives in Bad Axe, are fit to raise their child.

Baby Anthony weighed 5 pounds, 15 ounces at birth. Tuscola County Prosecutor Mark E. Reese said medical tests done on the infant showed the presence of opiates, barbiturates and cocaine. Huron County Sheriff Kent D. Tibbits said the baby also tested positive for the active ingredient in marijuana.

Police interviewed the mother in December when she was eight months pregnant, and said she admitted an addiction to pain medications and that she smoked marijuana twice a week.

The father, 27, remains in the Huron County Jail awaiting trial on four drug charges connected with a Dec. 6 raid on an apartment he and the mother shared near Bad Axe.

Prosecutors allege the father is a habitual offender. He faces up to 30 years in prison on the most serious charge, possession of less than 25 grams of cocaine.

When Huron County sheriff's deputies executed a search warrant at the apartment in December, they reported finding crack cocaine, marijuana, a variety of prescription pills and cocaine. They also reported finding the father and mother and two Port Austin men there, along with smells and sights indicating drug use.

"It's their opinion drugs had been used that night," said Gaertner, who continues talking with detectives regarding possible charges against one of the Port Austin men. v

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02/02/2007

## Welshans trial moved to March

By STACY LANGLEY , Tribune Staff Writer

**BAD AXE** - A jury trial scheduled to hear the criminal case against a Bad Axe couple facing charges of first-degree child abuse after allegedly causing life-threatening injuries to their one-month-old nearly a year ago was set to start Tuesday. But it appears an insanity plea recently filed has changed the course of the case.

According to Huron County Prosecutor Mark J. Gaertner, the court was given notice of an insanity plea filed on behalf of 24-year-old Stardust Welshans, by her Bad Axe Attorney James Woodworth.

In mid-January, Woodworth filed a motion with Huron County Circuit Court Judge M. Richard Knoblock asking for an independent psychological evaluation to clear up any possible conflicting diagnosis for Stardust Welshans. He also wanted to determine her mental status and whether or not mental health officials felt she was competent and could be held criminally responsible for any alleged actions. Knoblock granted the motion.

Gaertner said Welshans was evaluated for the second time last week, this time by Dr. Jeffrey Wendt, a forensic psychologist in Brighton. The first evaluation was at the state's Forensic Center in Ypsilanti.

All sides in the case met Wednesday afternoon in circuit court to discuss the evaluation along with other issues, including the unavailability of a witness next week. Also, a Walker Hearing must be conducted before the trial to determine whether statements Welshans made to police were done so voluntarily and can be allowed for the jury to hear at trial.

"The trial will not be taking place next week. A Walker Hearing was set for Feb. 26 to determine the admissibility of the statements by Stardust Welshans," said Gaertner, adding that the trial date has been pushed back to March 13. "The court has a very busy criminal and civil docket and we were given the first available opening we could find."

Stardust Welshans and her estranged husband, Ryan Welshans, are accused of injuring their one-month-old boy in early February 2006.

Ryan Welshans, also facing a charge of first-degree child abuse, remains lodged in the Huron County Jail.

Gaertner said Thursday afternoon "we are working out details with Ryan Welshans and his attorney David B. Herrington on a tentative plea agreement."

Exact details of the agreement are not being released at this time, but Gaertner did say, "I expect he (Ryan) will be testifying against (his wife) Stardust during her trial."

Gaertner added that even though the couple is still legally married, neither can invoke marital privilege, barring them from testifying against each other, because the case involves an alleged injury to a child.

Ryan Welshans is scheduled to appear Monday in Huron County Circuit Court to enter a plea in the case. Details of the agreement are expected to be made public at that time. Gaertner said Stardust Welshans, who remains free on bond, likely will attend to hear her husband's plea.

As for the child involved in the case, Gaertner said the boy is now a year old. "He is not out of the woods yet," he said. "He's still in his development stages."

Ryan and Stardust Welshans had two sons together. Their first son, who will turn 2 on Sunday, and the 1 year old. The couple voluntarily relinquished parental rights to both of their children in May 2006.

Gaertner said the children are living in separate homes in the Huron County area.

"Both are in a loving environment. These parents (Stardust and Ryan Welshans) have no contact with them (the children) whatsoever," he said. "They are out of harm's way from them, and both are in the process of being adopted by Huron County families."

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## Judge overturns murder conviction

Friday, February 02, 2007

By Steven Hepker

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A judge Thursday said a Jackson man convicted of killing his daughter did not get a fair trial.

"We need to have more confidence in a verdict," Circuit Judge Chad Schmucker said in ruling on an appeal by Shawndale Clark.

Schmucker overturned a felony murder conviction -- for which Clark was serving a mandatory life sentence -- and let stand a manslaughter conviction. Clark, 27, will remain in prison on convictions of manslaughter and first-degree child abuse in the June 17, 2005, death of 14-month-old Amaree Gail.

The decision sets up three possibilities for prosecutors. They can request a new trial for felony murder, allow Schmucker to sentence Clark on the remaining convictions, or appeal to the Michigan Court of Appeals.

Preliminary indications are that prosecutors will ask for a new trial, pending approval by Prosecutor Hank Zavislak.

"We have nothing to lose if we go to trial. ! That's why we have tentatively decided to do it," Assistant Prosecutor Jerrold Schrotenboer said. "The utter worst thing that could happen -- an acquittal -- we'd still end up with one 15-year felony."

Clark appealed to the Michigan Court of Appeals. The appeals court sent the case to Schmucker.

State-appointed appellate defender Robin McCowan motioned for a new trial, or for a reduced conviction based on ineffective counsel and resulting prejudice.

Clark was charged with felony murder in the case and with second-degree murder. A jury was allowed to settle on a lesser charge of manslaughter for the second-degree murder charge -- and it did -- but it did not receive that option for the felony murder charge.

At issue was whether it was trial strategy or an error when defense attorney George Lyons did not ask Schmucker to give the jury the option of a lesser offense with felony murder.

"This was not a strategy," McCowan argued. "It was flat-out ignorance of the law."

Schrotenboer said it might not have been a smart move, but it was a legitimate strategy by Lyons.

"All you have to do is look at the pictures," Schrotenboer said of evidence of what prosecutors alleged was a beating by Clark. "This is not manslaughter."

McCowan said the jury showed it could compromise in the manslaughter conviction and should have had a chance to pick a lesser alternative to felony murder.

Reading the trial transcript, Schmucker said he asked Assistant Prosecutor Allison Bates if there would be a lesser charge with felony murder, and she said the lesser alternatives went with the second-degree murder count. He then asked Lyons the same question, and he said there was no lesser alternative with felony



murder, Schmucker said.

Lyons testified Thursday that his strategy was to prove the toddler died of a "short fall" against the bathtub, not by physical abuse. He and Clark thought they could beat the child-abuse and felony murder charges, he said.

Tacking a lesser offense on felony murder might have confused the jury, Lyons said. He said he could not remember discussions regarding jury instructions.

Schmucker said he did not believe the failure to ask for the lesser charges was a strategy.

"The attorneys erred in the understanding of the lesser charges," Schmucker said.

Schmucker agreed with McCowan that Lyons did an excellent job of defending Clark, asking questions and introducing expert witnesses that cast reasonable doubts.

"He did a fine job, but I find ineffective assistance of counsel," Schmucker concluded.

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## Police raid finds drugs in candy wrappers, diapers

PUBLISHED: February 3, 2007

By Jameson Cook  
Macomb Daily Staff Writer

Crack cocaine rocks wrapped in a baby diaper and Ecstasy pills wrapped in candy packaging were among drugs and items police said they seized in a raid of a Clinton Township trailer, where officials said five young children lived in "horrendous" conditions.

Police seized crack cocaine, marijuana, Ecstasy and prescription drugs Wednesday night from the trailer located northeast of Gratiot Avenue and Joy Boulevard and arrested a man and woman. Marvin Jerrell Blocker and Tanya Rachelle Humphreys, both 24, were charged Friday in 41B District Court in Clinton with six counts of drug delivery charges and one count of second-degree child abuse.

"This is a very disturbing case," said assistant Macomb prosecutor William Dailey. "The living conditions were horrendous, not livable under any circumstances that you would consider normal."

The five children from ages of about six months to 5 years were removed from the home on South Keystone Way by state child protective services staffers. Officials believe Blocker is the father of all of the children, and Humphreys is the mother of at least one of them.

There was no evidence that the children suffered physical injuries or consumed drugs; the child abuse charges resulted from the allegation they placed the children in a potentially dangerous situation, Dailey said.

Police officers from the County of Macomb Enforcement Team and Clinton Township in their reports described a "vile" odor and "filthy" living conditions in the single-wide unit, according to Lt. Brenda Baker and Sgt. Darren Bondy of COMET. At least one officer wore a mask over his nose, officials said.

Police found feces from three pit bulls and weeks-old food, according to police. The mattresses were soiled and didn't have bedding.

Drugs being stored in children's items and around the children alarmed Dailey, who is chief of the prosecutors office drug unit and a father.

"It's sickening to see this and know that the drugs were kept in that way," he said. "Some people try to say that drugs are victimless crimes. Unfortunately, until law enforcement got involved, these kids didn't know the bad environment they were living in. It's reprehensible that they (the defendants) would use their children's things to further their own drug use and dealing."

Fifty Ecstasy pills were found in groups of five or 10 in candy containers used for "Smarties" candies, according to police. The pills were found within reach of the children -- on a storage container about 18 inches off the floor, officials said.

It appears the defendants used baby food jars to "cook" the cocaine, Dailey said.

Among several packages each containing 1 or more grams of crack was crack rocks in an

unused, folded baby diaper.

Police also confiscated more than one pound of marijuana, 120 Vicodin pills, an unknown number of OxyContin pills, weight scales, a police scanner and \$334 in cash. No weapons were found.

Blocker, who was free on bond for a misdemeanor marijuana charge in 41B, was also charged with resisting arrest.

Magistrate Daniel Goulette set a \$300,000 cash or surety bond for Blocker and a \$250,000 bond cash or surety for Humphreys.

Blocker was taken to the Macomb County Jail and Humphreys suffered a seizure moments after her arraignment and was taken to a hospital, police said.

COMET investigated the case for two weeks, police said. Undercover officers made purchases at the home, which is located near the borders of Mount Clemens and Harrison Township.

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## Ministers rally behind tasered Detroit police sergeant

**By Diane Bukowski**

The Michigan Citizen

DETROIT — Dozens of ministers and their congregations are rallying behind Detroit Police Sgt. David Marshall, an African-American resident of Farmington Hills who was tasered by white police officers in front of his home there Dec. 13.

Marshall, who had asked to see the officers' supervisor before stepping out of his car after a traffic stop for running a red light, was in full uniform and armed with his department-issued weapon at the time.

"Has the passing of Proposition 2 sent out a signal to some cultures that it's open season on African-Americans?" asked Pastor Charles Ellis of Greater Grace Temple, where Marshall is a member. "We're appalled that in 2007, an officer in full uniform can have a weapon drawn on him and used on him for a routine traffic stop. I thought police officers gave courtesy to other officers."

Farmington Hills police claimed that Marshall, who outranked the officers, had refused to give up his gun and alleged that he reached for it before they tasered him. He is charged with resisting arrest, assault on a police officer, and an unrelated child abuse case from an incident eight months before the tasing.

Nearly 200 church members packed a hearing on the case at 47th District Court in Farmington Hills Jan. 20 to show support for Marshall. The next hearing is scheduled for April 25.

Ellis said that the "Concerned Clergy of Southeast Michigan" has information from other Black Farmington Hills residents that they too have been tasered and otherwise harassed by white officers there. He did not release any names of affected residents.

"Farmington Hills Police Chief William Dwyer was with the Detroit Police Department at the time that Chief John Nichols and the STRESS (Stop the Robberies Enjoy Safe Streets) unit reigned," Ellis said. "Has that STRESS mentality resurfaced again?"

Marshall's attorney Arnold Reed said Marshall, 39, is a 12-year veteran of the Detroit police force, the father of a daughter and a nephew he is raising as his son.

The child abuse charge against Marshall relates to allegations that he hit his son, who is in a wheelchair, last May, according to published reports.

Reed said the charges are "an 11th hour attempt to back us down."

"They are something that can't be proved," he said. "He was never charged with them until this incident."

Reed said that the Farmington Hills officer in the case, a 16-year veteran who has not been identified, disrespected Marshall's rank when he did not call for a superior and instead called for back-up.

He said a police car videotape of the incident shows Marshall asking for a supervisor, and shows the officer telling Marshall at one point, "You're a fucking idiot, asshole."

Farmington Hills Police Chief William Dwyer said that the department does not intend to bring any disciplinary action against that officer.

"I indicated the officer's conduct was disappointing," said Dwyer, "but likewise the unprofessional and criminal conduct of the Detroit police officer led to the call for back-up from a 22-year police veteran. For the safety of all, the Detroit officer was repeatedly directed to surrender his firearm. At one point, he placed his hand on his weapon, a scuffle ensued and the taser was administered to stun him."

Dwyer claimed race played no role in the incident, and that the department has not received any complaints of racial discrimination at least within the last year.

He said he started work with the Detroit police department in 1962, and left as a commander in 1985. He was promoted to sergeant in 1971. The STRESS unit, which was responsible for the deaths of 17 unarmed Black men,

was disbanded under Detroit Mayor Coleman Young in 1974. It was a major issue in his election the previous year, with Chief Nichols running as Young's opponent.

Dwyer said he had no close relationship with Nichols and no association with STRESS, but was in charge of the department's narcotics division for eight years and worked with the organized crime and vice units as well.

The Concerned Clergy of Southeast Michigan can be reached at 313-543-6057.



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Published February 4, 2007

## Angel House gets needed funding

By CHRISTIE BLECK  
Lansing Community Newspapers

MASON — Who could deny shelter to a child removed from an abusive situation? That's why Angel House was built. However, keeping the funding channeled to the shelter is an ongoing challenge, so local officials had to step in.



The Ingham County Board of commissioners has allocated extra money for Angel House to meet its budget demands.

The Ingham County Board of Commissioners recently granted an emergency appropriation of \$40,000 from its 2006 Contingency Fund to help the shelter, located at 830 Kerns Road.

Angel House provides 24-hour shelter for children who have been physically or sexually abused or severely neglected. Its program objectives are many, but they mainly include providing a safe, child-friendly environment for children to be interviewed, a place for them to receive counseling and for professionals to place children who will not return to their biological home.

Local public and private child-welfare leaders developed Angel House to fill in what they identified as critical gaps in Ingham County regarding the well-being of children in abusive homes. These gaps involved children needing emergency shelter who often were taken into protective custody in the middle of the night, and that various agencies interviewed children on separate days and in different locations.

### Budget issues

Opening in May 2006, Angel House had a \$350,000 construction debt. However, the Ingham County Department of Human Services allocated an additional \$408,000 in its 2006 Child Care Fund for the shelter to use in a per diem basis.

Since it opened, Angel House has averaged only about four children per day, so that \$408,000 has not been spent. Large donations that could have been used to pay off the construction debt, be placed in an endowment or reserve or fund non-shelter services were quickly used up by the operational deficit that resulted from the low daily average.

This low census, however, is partly due to the new Family to Family model of foster care. Maureen Sorbet, a spokesperson for the Michigan Department of Human Services, explained its shift in funding philosophy.

"First of all, we try to keep children in their own home if we can do it safely," Sorbet said.

If that isn't possible, she said, the department then tries to place children with a relative living nearby. If that fails, the next option is placing them in a foster home.

Sorbet said that studies have shown that children do better in a family-like setting.

However, because of that change in funding, Angel House faced being underfunded for the 2006 fiscal year. Thus came the \$40,000 granted by the board of commissioners.

The granting of the extra money came with the explanation that the request was consistent with the board's priorities of "meeting basic needs."

Last year, the Ingham County Department of Human Services (DHS) substantiated 1,327 cases of child abuse in neglect in the county, with law enforcement agencies investigating 565 other cases. Data from Sparrow Hospital Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners on the frequency of sexual abuse indicated more than 200 abused children were examined in 2005.

### **'Pleased with progress'**

Jerre Cory, Angel House director, noted that more than 500 youngsters have gone through the shelter's Children's Assessment Center (CAC), and about 150 have been housed at Angel House since its May opening.

"We're very pleased with our progress," Cory said.

Cory noted the CAC is important because forensic interviews are conducted there in the presence of police, prosecutors and other officials. A medical examination also is given to children, she said, "where it's a more child-friendly environment."

To also combat the low shelter census, Angel House has broadened its scope to include emergency respite care and helping children at risk to disruption from a foster home or those making the transition to a new foster home after disruption.

Cory said fund-raising efforts will continue to bring in more funds for Angel House, which, she pointed out, is a new program that provides temporary housing to newborns up to 17-year-old youngsters and is not a full-time orphanage.

Mary Reed, director of fund development for Child and Family Services, Capital Area, said that when the Angel House concept was created nine years ago, everyone from the Prosecuting Attorney's Office to DHS colleagues was on board.

"We agreed that's the way our county really needed to improve services to children entering foster care," Reed said.

Reed said that the transition into foster care should be as smooth as possible for the child; instead of waiting for hours in an agency lobby, children are taken to Angel House where they can stay for up to two weeks while an appropriate foster care home is found. A child also can get a hot meal, clean clothing, a shower or bath and a warm bed.

"This protocol keeps sibling groups together instead of being split in two or three or more foster homes," Reed explained. "It gives these children a sense that everything happening to them is in their best interest."

Cory agreed that the Angel House scenario is good for them.

"It's amazing how quickly they stabilize," she said.

But then the financial picture in Michigan changed.

"Unfortunately, as Angel House went from concept to reality, the financial condition of our state deteriorated," Reed said. "Cuts in services had to be made. Because the majority of Angel House funding comes from daily reimbursement from the county and state, this program was affected."

That doesn't necessarily spell doom for Angel House, according to Reed.

"Everyone involved with Angel House knows and believes that it is still desperately needed," she said.

Proof of that, Reed pointed out, is the board of commissioners' decision to grant \$40,000 in emergency funding for the shelter.

Cory, who called the amount a temporary shortfall, said she is basically happy with Angel House's situation.

"We love where we are," Cory said.

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# Mother seeks her lost little girl — half a world away

BY ELIZABETH COUNCIL

[ecouncil@grandhaventribune.com](mailto:ecouncil@grandhaventribune.com)

PORT SHELDON TOWNSHIP — Like most parents, Christina Lazaridis knows it's the little moments that count the most — first steps, first words and the first day of school are monumental milestones for children, their parents, and even their grandparents.



But to the Port Sheldon Township woman, just seeing her 6-year-old daughter, Varvara, face to face is almost enough.

For nearly five years, Lazaridis, 34, has had only brief, minimal contact with her daughter after her ex-husband, Emmanuel Lazaridis, 36, fled the United States with then-2-year-old Varvara, using an illegal passport in November 2002.

Four years passed before Lazaridis was once again able to touch her daughter's skin, see her smile and tell her she loves her face to face.

During the four years Varvara was missing, Lazaridis traveled to the far corners of Europe, hoping to reunite with the long-lost toddler she remembers — the baby girl with big brown eyes and an infectious smile.

All the while, Varvara had outgrown her baby face, learned to speak Greek, and even attended her first days of school — as her mother followed their trail and praying daily that Varvara was at least alive and well.

Now that Varvara and Emmanuel Lazaridis have been located in Greece, with the help of FBI information, it's up to local law enforcement authorities to retrieve her daughter, Lazaridis said.

Lazaridis has desperately pleaded for assistance from every authority that would listen to her case. Countless requests for help have been sent to the offices of U.S. Rep. Pete Hoekstra, R-Holland; U.S. Sen. Debbie Stabenow, D-Mich.; and even Gov. Jennifer Granholm, Lazaridis said.

According to Lazaridis, the decision whether or not to pursue an international warrant for the arrest of Emmanuel Lazaridis now rests on the shoulders of Ottawa County law enforcement authorities.

Lazaridis is hoping a renewed interest in her case will force law enforcement authorities to finally issue an international warrant and, ultimately, reunite her with the little girl she lost so long ago.

### Life in the United States

Lazaridis met her husband 15 years ago while attending DePaul University in Chicago. Emmanuel, from Wilmington, Del., was pursuing medical studies at the University of Chicago when the pair met through mutual friends.

Through their shared passion for the Greek Orthodox religion, the pair's friendship blossomed into marriage in 1995.

However, Lazaridis describes the nearly 10 years she was married to Emmanuel Lazaridis as a constant struggle for her freedom. She said her husband controlled just about everything she did: what she would cook for dinner, who her friends were — and even which prescription drugs she would take, regardless of doctor's orders.

"I was in love, and I was naive," Lazaridis said. "I was young. I wish I wouldn't have done it," she said of marrying her husband.

Lazaridis was quick to retract that statement, however, because had she not married Emmanuel Lazaridis, she would not have her daughter Varvara — even if the girl lives a world away.

Lazaridis said her husband "told me what to think. I never had a say in the marriage; it was always about him."

Even though Lazaridis experienced severe physical and psychological abuse from Emmanuel Lazaridis, she never considered divorce an option.

"I don't believe in divorce," she said, citing her Greek Orthodox faith.

In 1998, the couple moved from Indianapolis to Tampa, Fla., so Emmanuel Lazaridis could work as a medical researcher at the University of South Florida.

Three years later, on July 2, 2000, their daughter Varvara was born.

Lazaridis said her husband forbid her parents from seeing their first grandchild until the baby was at least 40 days old.

"He said my parents aren't smart enough, aren't rich enough, aren't religious enough," Lazaridis said.

Even under the restrictions Emmanuel Lazaridis imposed, Lazaridis described the two years spent raising her daughter as "paradise."

Lazaridis was Varvara's sole care provider. She made homemade baby food, taught Varvara sign language and even learned how to give her baby massages — anything to strengthen the mother-daughter bond, Lazaridis said.



But living under the tight-fisted rule of her husband was not easy, even with the hope and happiness a new baby can bring. When Varvara cried, Emmanuel Lazaridis yelled at his wife to make her stop, she said. He blamed Lazaridis for everything that went wrong, she said.

In December 2001, Emmanuel Lazaridis announced to his wife that he was moving to Lyon, France, to take a job with the World Health Organization, and that he was planning to take Varvara with him.

Lazaridis said she was totally opposed to moving to France, but she had no choice if she wanted to stay with her daughter.

### Life on the run

The Lazaridis' marriage took a turn for the worse just two months after moving to France. Emmanuel Lazaridis' control over his wife was stronger than ever — so much so that he threatened to kill her late one night because she was being too loud, Lazaridis said.

Knowing her husband was fully capable of doing just that, Lazaridis immediately left everything she had in France, including her marriage, to seek refuge in the safety of her parents' home in Port Sheldon Township. That was September 2002.

"I knew my life was in danger," she said. "He told me he wanted to put me out of my misery."

Grabbing only a few diapers, some toys and her purse, Lazaridis and Varvara left France in a fight for life, she said.

Two months later, however, Lazaridis' estranged husband gained temporary custody of Varvara in Ottawa County, while Lazaridis was seeking care from a local hospital. Courts here ruled he could not leave the United States with Varvara.

Just a few days later, Emmanuel Lazaridis used a false passport to kidnap the 2 year old, returning to work in France without his wife.

The next four years of Varvara's and Emmanuel Lazaridis' lives are unknown to Christina Lazaridis.

Where did Varvara live? What did she look like? Where did she attend school? Lazaridis still does not have answers to her questions.

After seeking a formal divorce order from France on April 5, 2005, French courts ruled in favor of Lazaridis. In the eyes of both French and United States law, she currently has custodial rights over Varvara.

On Oct. 7, 2004, Ottawa County issued a national warrant for Emmanuel Lazaridis' arrest on a kidnapping-related charge of custodial interference.

But since 2002, authorities said Emmanuel Lazaridis has not been back to the United States, where that warrant would give U.S. law enforcement agents authority to arrest him.

Lazaridis said her estranged husband has pulled almost every stunt possible to stall litigation — firing lawyers, missing trials, even fleeing countries.

In a June 2004 ruling, a French court not only ruled that Lazaridis should have full custody of Varvara, but also that Emmanuel Lazaridis pay his ex-wife monthly alimony of 1,000 euros (about \$1,300 U.S.) and monthly child support of 500 euros (about \$650 U.S.).

The French court reported that, as a result of Emmanuel Lazaridis' "quite disrespectful" behavior towards previous legal decisions, and because his behavior "strongly resembles" a flight risk, Christina Lazaridis should "exclusively exercise parental authority."

Emmanuel Lazaridis has also been arrested and jailed in France after failing to allow Lazaridis contact with Varvara, and for failure to pay the court-ordered amounts.

However, each time an international court has awarded custody to Lazaridis, her ex-husband has fled with Varvara before the law could be enforced, she said.

Emmanuel Lazaridis has taken Varvara to France, Switzerland, and now Greece, according to Christina Lazaridis. She expects him to flee again, possibly to China.

#### A short reunion

On Oct. 2, 2006, Lazaridis was briefly reunited with Varvara in Greece for the first time since she vanished from Michigan four years prior — "under very difficult circumstances," she said.

In a desperate measure to see her daughter again, Lazaridis signed a non-legal agreement with Emmanuel Lazaridis stating Lazaridis could visit her daughter only once a week for two hours at a time, and only between October and November 2006.

"The Kleenex was close by and we cried frequently," Lazaridis recalled of her first visits with Varvara. "She looked just like me. She had long blonde hair in pigtails and a scar on her forehead. She's just adorable."

As part of the agreement, she had to pay a Greek therapist 120 euros (\$156 U.S.) to supervise the visits, even though she says Emmanuel Lazaridis owes her more than \$100,000 in back alimony and child support. Lazaridis calls the arrangement extortion and blackmail.

"I don't care about the money. I just care about my daughter," Lazaridis said.

Her ex-husband supervised her visits and even told her how to interact with her daughter. They played with toys and games, all the while Lazaridis tried to reconnect with the daughter she lost so long ago.

"'Those hands,' I kept saying over and over, 'They are the same hands, but you have grown so much! They are so big!'" Lazaridis recalled of her visits with Varvara last fall. "I was holding back the tears, wiping them on a tissue."

#### Working for a permanent reunion

With a mountain of paperwork and only a few mementos saved from Varvara's childhood, Lazaridis has devoted the last four years to seeking a permanent reunion with her daughter. Her efforts are her full-time job.

For the last eight months, and off and on throughout the last four years, Lazaridis has resided in Europe — and most recently Heraklion, on the island of Crete, in Greece — in the hopes of tracking down Emmanuel Lazaridis and Varvara. She hopes her efforts will allow her to bring Varvara home to West Michigan, where the mother and daughter can rebuild their life together.

But a quick and simple return of Varvara is not easy, law enforcement officers say. The complicated international legalities require Lazaridis to have several different lawyers in several different countries.

And, although the couple has been divorced for more than two years, Emmanuel Lazaridis has sought out several divorce hearings from different countries in an attempt to get the custody ruling he wants, said Lazaridis' lawyer in Greece, Alexandros Anifantakis. This has further complicated litigation, Anifantakis said.

"All the decisions are in favor of Christina," Anifantakis said. "He has filed so many papers saying this is a war between Greece and America.

"We need the help of the United States," Anifantakis continued, noting he is ashamed of Emmanuel's Greek heritage.

Anifantakis said this case is the most unusual case he has seen, and he feels the Greek courts will serve justice to Lazaridis.

The lawyer also said that when Lazaridis' estranged husband found out he had lost custody in France, he obtained illegal custody papers from the Dominican Republic, and registered them on the Greek island of Crete. Anifantakis added that those papers were found to be illegal and were dismissed.

Most recently, Emmanuel Lazaridis has requested a fourth divorce, and custodial rights of Varvara, from the courts in Greece. Anifantakis said this is clear indication he is getting ready to leave Greece again.

Anifantakis and Christina Lazaridis expect the Greek courts will follow the consistent rulings of both the French courts and Ottawa County's order that she should have sole custody of her daughter in the United States.

Case debated at county, national level

Although Varvara's whereabouts are currently known, the girl is still listed on the U.S. State Department's National Center for the Missing and Exploited Children's registry as a victim of parental abduction.

The Ottawa County warrant for Emmanuel Lazaridis' arrest also still stands, giving authority to any U.S. law enforcement agency to arrest him, should he return to the United States. The felony warrant carries a penalty of one year in jail and/or a \$2,000 fine.

According to Ottawa County Sheriff Gary Rosema, under the findings of his department's investigation, the national warrant is sufficient. Rosema said Ottawa County has encouraged the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Attorney's office to pursue an international warrant.

However, without an international warrant, and as long as Emmanuel Lazaridis is in a foreign jurisdiction, the situation remains complicated.

According to the U.S. Department of State, the Ottawa County Prosecutor's office must contact the FBI to request an issuance of a federal Unlawful Flight to Avoid Prosecution (UFAP) warrant for the arrest of Emmanuel Lazaridis.

The federal warrant would serve to inform Greece that the abduction of Varvara is a violation of U.S. law and that the abductor is a federal fugitive. An arrest warrant would also be necessary in order for authorities to seek extradition of Emmanuel Lazaridis.

However, said Ottawa County Prosecutor Ron Frantz, "Ottawa County is not in a position to fund or conduct an international extradition."

Frantz said that from the county's perspective, based on previous discussions with the U.S. Attorney's office in Grand Rapids and the state department, the case reaches beyond the scope of work Ottawa County authorities would handle. Ottawa County has never extradited a fugitive from another country, Frantz added.

"We believe it's a federal issue," he said.

Lazaridis said she now feels the judicial systems of Ottawa County and the United States are failing her. She said Ottawa County probably does not want to spend the time and money it would take to extradite Emmanuel Lazaridis, even if it means a safe return of young Varvara. Lazaridis said she was told it could cost Ottawa County as much as \$20,000 to issue the warrant and have Emmanuel Lazaridis extradited to the United States.

In a letter from the Detroit offices of the FBI, dated Nov. 28, 2006, to Sen. Debbie Stabenow's office, special agent Dan Roberts wrote that "until Ottawa County agrees to a worldwide extradition, (the FBI is) unable to seek an Unlawful Flight to Avoid Prosecution warrant."

As of Thursday, FBI agents in Detroit said they have fully investigated the case, and stand by Roberts' letter — saying now the case rests in the hands of Ottawa County law enforcement authorities.

Lazaridis has developed a comprehensive Web site, [www.bringbarbarahome.org](http://www.bringbarbarahome.org), to spread her mission and share her struggles with the case. Lazaridis also is seeking donations to help pay for her legal and travel fees, which have amounted to more than \$100,000 owed to several lawyers around the globe.

Lazaridis is expected to go to court in Greece on Feb. 15 to seek a custody judgment in her favor.

Despite the obstacles she faces, Lazaridis still keeps faith Varvara will return to her beachside home in West Michigan soon.

"This is my life, a nightmare of international child abduction," she said. "I long to hold my only child, now 6 years old, in my arms and take her back into the country where we are all from — the United States."

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Christina Lazaridis will present a film on the case of her missing daughter, Varvara, on Sunday at 12:30 p.m., at Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church, 185 E. Pontaluna, Road in Norton Shores.

To contact Christina, call (616) 403-1147, or e-mail her at [christina@bringbarbarahome.org](mailto:christina@bringbarbarahome.org).

Donations to the "Bring Varvara Home" nonprofit organization can be made at any Macatawa Bank.





## Activists: Let Abraham live his life

Drop call for special hearing, group asks

February 3, 2007

BY FRANK WITSIL

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

An activist group said Friday it wants state Rep. Kim Meltzer to call off her request for a special hearing to investigate what promises government officials made to Nathaniel Abraham, and is accusing her of using the issue for political gain.

"I think that probe has already taken place," said the Rev. Charles E. Williams, president of the Detroit Chapter of the National Action Network, referring to this week's revelations by Department of Human Services Director Marianne Udow that the convicted killer would be reimbursed \$1,200 by the state for housing.

Meltzer, R-Clinton Township, responded Friday that she is still seeking the hearing -- and is "taken aback by the accusations."

She said that her interest in seeking the probe is to find out exactly what the state promises offenders who are released from prison and why there was confusion -- and misinformation from the DHS -- about what Abraham would receive.

Meltzer added that Udow's disclosures were a first step -- but did not answer all the questions.

At age 11, Abraham shot and killed 18-year-old Ronnie Greene Jr. in Pontiac and became the youngest person in Michigan charged as an adult with murder. Abraham, now of Bay City, was released from court supervision Jan. 18, one day before his 21st birthday, and since has been at the center of arguments waged among attorneys and state officials about what financial support he was to get.

Williams, whose group recently helped broker a compromise with DTE involving the utility company policy of reporting delinquent customer bills to credit bureaus, said Friday that Meltzer and others should "leave Nathaniel Abraham alone," so he can get on with his life.

As of Friday, no decisions had been made on whether a legislative hearing would be held on the matter.

Contact **FRANK WITSIL** at 248-351-3690 or [witsil@freepress.com](mailto:witsil@freepress.com).

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## State owes Nathaniel Abraham nothing more

February 3, 2007

Hats off to Rochelle Riley and Brian Dickerson for their Feb. 2 columns on convicted murderer Nathaniel Abraham ("Counting the ways we resent Nate" and "Abraham owes state, not other way around"). Michigan residents are disgusted with how his release was handled, from the Superfly outfit to the promises (since rescinded) of complimentary housing and money for education. Then we have the specter of Oprah jumping in to negotiate an apology -- not to assist the devastated family, but for ratings.

Abraham is a ticking time bomb that will explode the minute anyone approaches him and banters about his past criminal lifestyle. It's just a matter of time before he is returned to the confines of a jail system. **Bill Kalmar**

**Bill Kalmar**  
*Lake Orion*

### Obligation fulfilled

For the last 10 years, Abraham has been living on taxpayer dollars. I understand that he will need some direction in his life. Maybe his family can help him. The State of Michigan has fulfilled its obligation. Enough is enough.

**Linda Larson**  
*Sterling Heights*

### A case of racism

I am deeply troubled by the fact that the State of Michigan made promises to Nathaniel Abraham and apparently forgot the promises were made. If the state made the promises, the state should keep them. The fact that a state agency made promises to Abraham does not warrant any kind of legislative hearing

What is happening here is a not-so-subtle case of racism. I will never believe that had Abraham been an 11-year-old white boy, he would have been tried for murder, given the facts of the case. There are too many elements of this case that point to an accidental killing.

While a life was taken in this tragedy, we need to remember that Abraham has paid dearly for this accident. Spending 10 years of his young life in the custody of the state could not have been a picnic. I realize that the victim is no longer here and that his family suffered a great loss. However, Abraham was a child playing with a weapon that should have been discarded because of its dilapidated condition.

Nothing can be gained from a legislative hearing other than to further attest to the racism that is so evident in this case.

**Cleophus Roseboro**  
*Detroit*

### He'll be back

We taxpayers have already supported Nate Abraham for 10 years. We owe him nothing. In fact, he owes society. He's upset about the \$1,000 he thought was going to be reimbursed? He should have thought about that before he bought his pink "gators," fur coat and gold earrings. I don't hold much hope for this guy not being back in the system within a year. His priorities are messed up.

**Lori Gabbert**  
*Westland*

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Article published Feb 5, 2007

LaGrand: We must reach out to our youth

**Elizabeth Huff**

*The Enquirer*

The face of youth violence is changing. More girls and children with mental health problems are landing in juvenile court. They have more access to weapons, and they see more violence in the media. When push comes to shove, they reach for what's most familiar: destructive ways to solve a conflict.

But Reggie LaGrand, Calhoun County Juvenile Home director, said to avoid youth and gang violence, people need to reach out to them first.

He spoke Sunday at St. Thomas Episcopal Church's weekly Rector's Forum. LaGrand worked as a youth specialist and probation officer for many years with the Calhoun County Juvenile Court System and then as a student support specialist and assistant principal at Ann J. Kellogg Elementary School. On Feb. 12 he will become a program director at W.K. Kellogg Foundation to continue working to improve children's lives.

"Years ago, probably before I started (in the Juvenile court system), you had in your facility just that 'good old juvenile delinquent.' You know, 'I'm not going to school. I'm not cooperating,'" LaGrand said. "Over time I think there's been a change."

The Juvenile Home, just outside Marshall, is a detention center for kids under age 18, and can hold up to 42 kids at one time. Usually about 35 kids are there at any given time, staying an average of 28 days.

"When I worked there years ago, and up until 1990, if you had more than two or three girls you thought the world was coming to an end," LaGrand said. "Now it's nothing to be working with eight to 12 girls."

While medication can help those with mental health problems to think through nonviolent resolutions, he still thinks communication is the best remedy.

A lot of the kids sent to the Juvenile Home committed a crime against another person, LaGrand said.

"Those problems can only be solved by working with people," he said. "If we're having relationship problems, the best way to solve that problem is through a relationship, teaching new skills, conflict resolution, how to talk with people as opposed to fighting, as opposed to violence."

St. Thomas church member David Hasenauer of Battle Creek understood that staff at the Juvenile Home and other organizations like The Advocates and the Boys and Girls Club of Battle Creek are doing their best to teach alternatives to youth violence, but he asked. "What can the rest of us do to make it better?"

"People have to get involved early on," LaGrand said. "If everybody in this room reached one kid, that's going to make a difference in the life of that kid, and then we are going to see a difference."

*Elizabeth Huff is a health and features reporter. She can be reached at 966-0684 or [ehuff@battlecr.gannett.com](mailto:ehuff@battlecr.gannett.com).*

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Published February 5, 2007

## 'Awful difficult life': Ingham agencies expect homelessness to rise

story by Susan Vela • photos by Kevin W. Fowler

Patrick Patterson glanced into his rearview mirror.

A bright "8" shone in the glass, letting him know more than he desired about the frigid temperature outdoors.

He then pulled away from Volunteers of America, which operates emergency shelters along Larch Street in Lansing, and drove into the cold, dark night, searching for the city's homeless for an annual census in January.

These days as temperatures hover around zero, many of those who might normally prefer the streets are jamming emergency shelters.

That was true as Patterson tried to track them down late Jan. 25 as well.

His role in the annual census of those living on Lansing's streets was vital.

Agencies serving Ingham County's poorest demographic group are predicting an increase of more than 5 percent over the 2006 census, which counted 415.

They point to Michigan's economic depression and, to a lesser extent, the Persian Gulf War and current fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq, which traumatized some veterans.

Their final tally - which will break down



(Photo by Kevin W. Fowler/For the Lansing State Journal)  
Making do: Randy James, who is homeless, sits on his bike during the annual counting of the area's homeless last month in Lansing. Other than the clothes on his back, he said the bike is his only possession. His request of the census-taker: warm gloves and shoes.

### Homelessness in Michigan

50,692 counted between January 2006 and June 2006

56 percent are adults and children in families

30 percent of homeless families are working poor

44 percent of homeless families have experienced homelessness more than once

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the homeless by age, gender and race - could determine federal funding for 2008-09.

Yet finding the homeless is difficult.

### **Tally important**

About 10 p.m. that day, Patterson's boots crunched along snowy sidewalks after he parked near Lansing City Market. The VOA's vice president of operations bounded up parking ramps and peeked through fencing until he found Randy James, 44 and homeless for 15 years.

James was riding a bicycle on Michigan Avenue across from the Lansing Center, when Patterson waved him down. James' coat was thin; his hat and gloves threadbare.

Patterson asked James a series of questions so James was included in the annual census. Then he asked him if there was anything that would ease his situation.

"I need some gloves. These here are about deleted," said James. "And some shoes."

At Patterson's urging, James promised to drop by the VOA for a warm place to sleep and then directed Patterson toward the Grand River, where he said more homeless dwelled.

Patterson and other volunteers counted 17 homeless during a five-hour span for the statewide census that went from 8 a.m. Jan. 25 to 8 a.m. the next morning.

The temperature, which never moved from the zero-degree mark because of the wind's chill, was a stark reminder of the Michigan winters that might seem infinitely long to those sleeping outside.

"A homeless person is a modern-day man or woman without a country," Patterson said. "There's no property. There are no places they can legally call their own. It's an awful difficult life to live."

### **Rising numbers**

It could take until April before Michigan grant applicants submit their final census numbers to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

There were 220 homeless in Eaton County in 2006. For this most recent census, Clinton County has identified 46.

Officials in both areas forecast an increase in coming years.

Yet the counts are just a snapshot of the region's problems.

Social service agencies estimate the number of homeless in Ingham County jumps to 700 when couch surfers - those sleeping at friends' and relatives' homes - are included. The county has a population of 260,000.

Lansing officials say 1,700 residents rely on the charity of places such as the VOA.

Michigan's loss of jobs might be hitting the impoverished faster and harder than existing plans, programs and service expansions.

Susan Cancro, chairwoman of the Greater Lansing Homeless Resolution Network and executive director of the local Advent House Ministries, said restaurants that once hired her clients have closed. And the college-educated are taking lower-skilled jobs.

"We're starting to see the effects of that," she said.

Advent House's weekend day shelter served 1,985 people last year. Compared with 2005, there was a 100 percent increase in war veterans and a 36 percent increase of those poor but still clinging to their homes, Cancro said.

Her budget was about \$700,000, with 70 percent dependent on federal, state, county and city allocations.

### **Money on its way**

According to Cancro, HUD should soon announce a \$1.9 million award for 2007-08 to the GLHRN agencies providing shelter services.

The recent census, though, can be used only for the 2008-09 grant application.

So, agencies wait. They offer the homeless a hot cup of coffee, friendly conversation, a meal.

"Most people don't want to give \$5 or five minutes to help the homeless," Stephanie Kuczynski, a Desert Storm veteran, said.

When she left the Air Force, Kuczynski spiraled out of control. She drank. She lost her kids because of how she handled a series of bad relationships and then a \$50,000-a-year job because of a layoff.

She became hooked on crack cocaine and heroin, hitting rock bottom about a year ago during a hotel stay.

Her hands scrambled through a phone book. The church Kuczynski dialed put her in contact with the VOA.

"If it weren't for these people that gave me hope for the future, I wouldn't have what I have today," the 36-year-old said.

She works at the VOA's thrift store, sees a therapist for post traumatic stress disorder and resides with an 8-month-old son in Holt.

They have their own place, contrary to a rising number in Greater Lansing.

Contact Susan Vela at 702-4248 or [svela@lsj.com](mailto:svela@lsj.com).

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## Invisible homeless

Young residents often difficult to ID for helpful services



Mary Busick

By Kim Hoyum - [khoyum@dailypress.net](mailto:khoyum@dailypress.net)

ESCANABA — Last year, the Michigan Summit for the Homeless estimated there were more than 50,000 homeless in the state. About 56 percent were families, and the rest were classified as adult individuals. But there's a gray area in the latter group: those 18-24 years old who can no longer claim state services as minors, but don't have the resources to stay afloat on their own.

Locally, there is help available in the form of transitional living apartments run by Voices for Youth, which has two apartments in Escanaba and one in Gladstone for homeless ages 18 to 21.

"The young people that come into our program, they struggle. They have a lot of hard work to do," said Mary Busick, Voices case manager.

The program provided services, referrals and crisis intervention to over 75 youth and young adults in 2006, and housed over 20 homeless young adults through its apartment program.

Youth come to Voices for various reasons.

Some, when they turn 18, lose state support checks, and if they are the oldest child, have to leave home due to parents' space or financial limitations. Others simply can't get along with their families well enough to live with them.

"We get a lot of that, where's there's just friction between the youth and the parents," Busick said.

Still other Voices clients have "aged out" of foster care or group homes, which usually do not provide services to youth 18 and older.

For some, finding a way to support themselves can be a years-long battle, made more difficult if they try to continue their education without family support or much earning power.

"There would be no way I could pay for college and my own place," said Brandy, 20, a Voices participant who asked that her last name not be used. She and her 15-month-old son were placed in a transitional apartment in November.

Brandy said she moved to the area to attend Bay College. "I wanted to start over and get a new life for me and my kid," she said. She had been homeless while living downstate, and came to the area with a friend. She's now a full-time college student with a work-study job doing night janitorial work at Bay.

Voices helped Brandy with food, transportation and the apartment, as well as connecting her with the state housing agency (MSHDA) to get an apartment voucher for a place of her own.

"I'm 20, you know, I didn't know what MSHDA was," she said. She's studying early childhood development and plans on being a preschool teacher. Voices requires her to save 30 percent of her income, and she said she'd like to save more than that, but daycare bills keep her from doing so.

"It's very opportune for someone else to save, everything's paid for, but I'm a little different. I've got a kid to take care of," she said.

Busick said two or three youth come to Voices each week for help. But the apartment program, which is intended for transitional living program and not an emergency shelter, is not for everybody.

"They don't all agree to the terms of our program, and then we help them find other resources," she said.

The terms of transitional living include seeking a job, or finishing school if they haven't, and taking life skills classes. Also, since it's a supervised living situation, other rules apply, such as no company, pets, smoking or alcohol in the apartments.

Robin Bailey-Webb, counselor for Teaching Family Homes and a member of the Delta County Homeless Coalition, said often homeless youth are hard to find and target for help.

"The thing about that population is they're very elusive," Bailey-Webb said.

Part of that problem is the frequency with which they tend to move around, or "sofa-surf" between friends' or family members' couches or spare rooms.

"There's a lot of sofa-surfers in the community, but if they don't come forward, there's no way we can know about them," Bailey-Webb said. Although sofa-surfers are, for the meantime, living on help from friends or family, they are still counted as part of the homeless population since they have no permanent regular place to sleep.

Part of the Voices for Youth program's services is also to provide temporary help for youth who don't consider themselves homeless, said Jodi Larson-Patten, street outreach worker for Voices.

If youths haven't eaten in a few days or is sleeping on a friend's couch but has no bedding, for example, they can come into the Voices office and get help with those things as well, Larson-Patten said.



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Article published Feb 3, 2007

## Shelter from the cold

Temperatures hovering below the freezing mark are keeping a local men's homeless shelter at full capacity.

Because of the need of extra beds, Philadelphia House II on Washington St. is opening a transitional house to free up space. The house, on E. Third St., is the original Philadelphia House that formerly housed homeless women many years ago. Now it will be used for homeless men who are on the verge of being on their own.

"The guys moving into the transitional house are trustworthy. They haven't caused any trouble and are working their way toward being on their own," said Mel Nieswender, director of Philadelphia House.

Even though it houses up to eight men, only six are moving to the new house right now. While the men are given additional independence, they will still be supervised and must follow the same rules as the Washington St. shelter, which involve no alcohol, no drugs and completing assigned chores and other duties.

Since the colder temperatures and snow finally have hit the area, Philadelphia House II has been at or near full capacity. Housing up to 26 men, currently 24 beds are taken. Mr. Nieswender expects the house to be full this weekend and through next week since weather reports indicate single-digit highs.

"In this weather, you can't sleep in your car or sleep in a house with no heat. It gets too cold at night. You can't survive that," he said.

This past week, around 1:30 a.m., Michigan State Police brought a man to the shelter who had been sitting by a tree off US-23.

"He would have frozen to death," Mr. Nieswender said. "So they brought him here."

The director anticipates the shelter to be at full capacity through the rest of the winter season.

"As soon as a bed gets freed up, another person takes it. That's how it's been since the weather has gotten colder," he explained. "I expect it to be like this for awhile. That's why I wanted to open the transitional house, so we can get more beds available. It also gives the guys (moving to the transitional house) some independence even though they will still be supervised."

The ages of the men at the shelter range from 18 to 56.

"Homelessness doesn't have an age. When you're cold, you're cold," he said. "I can't imagine being outside all night long when it's this cold."

This weekend, six men are moving into the transitional house. The two-story house includes four, fully-furnished bedrooms, three bathrooms and a washer and dryer.

Al Maddux, who has been living at Philadelphia House for three months, appreciates that he was asked to move to the transitional house.

"It's a trust issue. It's nice to know that Mel has trust in us," he said while checking out his new, temporary house on Friday.

John Kinney, who also has been living at the shelter for three months, moved into the transitional house on Friday. A recovering alcoholic, Mr. Kinney now works at TravelCenters of America and is saving up for a car.

"Right now, I take the bus and co-workers are nice enough to bring me home," he said from the E. Third St. house on Friday. "I still have awhile before I'm on my own because I still have child support to pay off. I'm getting back on my feet, though. My goals are to save up for a car, then save up for an apartment."

Mr. Maddux, an ex-convict and recovering drug addict, also is finding stability. This past year, he completed a six-month program at Salvation Army's Harbor Light and is now working at TravelCenters of America. He also hopes to purchase a vehicle, then an apartment.

"We're just trying to build a foundation," he said. "It's nice to have this opportunity to build on something ... to start over."

Philadelphia House I and II are run by Hotline to God, a nonprofit, nondenominational ministry whose mission is to provide help for the poor and homeless in Monroe County. Proceeds from the Damascus House thrift store support both homeless shelters.

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# THE BAY CITY TIMES

## Teen with no home will tell his story at CORY Place benefit

Monday, February 05, 2007

By AMY JO JOHNSON

TIMES WRITER

Justin D. Denno was out of options when he found a listing for CORY Place Inc. in the phone book last month.

The 19-year-old Saginaw man, who has been on his own since he was about 16, had just moved back to Michigan from Arizona and found himself with no place to stay.

His mom lives out of state. His father and other family members live in the Saginaw area, but from Denno's perspective, they weren't an option. With no high school diploma and no job, Denno said he was unable to find a place of his own.

So, he turned to CORY Place, a United Way agency that offers counseling, crisis intervention and sheltered care for troubled youths including runaways.

"I moved in here because I didn't have any other place to go," Denno said.

Denno plans to share his story and how CORY Place helped him at the nonprofit organization's annual dinner at 6 p.m. Thursday at Kryzsiak House Restaurant, 1605 Michigan Ave.

Denno, a senior, had just completed his first day of school at Bay-Arenac Community High School when he talked to The Times last Tuesday.

He said he hopes to graduate this spring and is submitting job applications. With some help from CORY Place, he's doing what a man needs to do get his life together, he said.

"They are very helpful," he said of the CORY Place staff. "They have counselors here and people are concerned with what you do with your life, and want you to do the right thing."

For the last quarter of 2006, CORY Place provided temporary emergency shelter for

22 youths for a total of 234 days, according to Jheri McAfee, executive director.

"You don't always think about runaway and homeless youth in our area, but there are," McAfee said. "We have a waiting list for people who are trying to get into (our) long-term program."

Economically, times are tough for the nonprofit agency, McAfee said, but she's reassured when she looks at the help coming in from the community.

"We've been fortunate that the community has really rallied around us," she said. "Everyone has just come together to say here's some things we can help you with."

Help has come from other area nonprofits, from volunteers who give their time to the organization and from increased public donations, she said.

Proceeds from the Feb. 8 fundraiser will be used to support CORY Place's temporary shelter, transitional living and counseling programs and to help pay for the

\$1.7 million complex the non-profit moved into in 2005.

The Feb. 8 fundraiser will include a performance by Virgil McDonagh, a local magician, at 7:30 p.m., as well as a silent auction, door prizes and a 50/50 drawing.

Tickets are \$20 each and may be purchased by calling Tamika at 895-5563 or sending an e-mail to [tamika@coryplace.org](mailto:tamika@coryplace.org).

- Amy Jo Johnson covers features for The Times. She can be reached at (989) 894-9637 or by e-mail at [ajohnson@bc-times.com](mailto:ajohnson@bc-times.com).

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**February 4, 2007**

## Indiana Killings Stir Fear Among Homeless

By [SUSAN SAULNY](#)

The first two bodies were found on a hunch in early January in South Bend, Ind., during a search of an old industrial part town. Two police officers popped open the lid of a manhole and down there, beaten to death and stacked upright one above the other, were two missing men, Michael S. Nolan Jr. and Michael W. Lawson.

Just three days later, as the investigation expanded, the police opened another manhole about 100 yards away from the first and found two more men, Jason A. Coates and Brian Talboom, their bodies bludgeoned and discarded underground the same way.

To one officer on the scene, Sgt. [David Wells](#), the discovery seemed more like something from a dark crime drama than anything that tranquil and academic South Bend had ever experienced. "It was really horrific," Sergeant Wells said. "And really perplexing."

The four men had only two things in common: they lived together in a burned-out building that they had painstakingly transformed into a makeshift home. And they made money by "scrapping" — hunting the urban landscape for increasingly valuable and marketable metals like copper and brass to sell to recyclers and construction businesses.

On Saturday night, the police announced that two homeless men had been arrested and charged with murder in the four deaths, said Capt. Jeffrey Walters of the South Bend Police Department.

The men, Daniel J. Sharp, 56, and Randy L. Reeder, 50, were being held in St. Joseph County, Ind., and Berrien County, Mich., respectively, according to The Associated Press. The police said Mr. Sharp and Mr. Reeder killed the four men because they believed they had stolen salvaged scrap metal that Mr. Sharp and Mr. Reeder had intended to sell.

The killings have fostered a sense of dread in the unusually tight-knit community of homeless men and women in South Bend. "I don't go out at night anymore," said James Manns, 45, who is living in a homeless shelter near downtown. "All we can do is step back and see if it happens again."

These sorts of feelings represent a reversal for many. Particularly among the homeless, the quiet college town of South Bend cemented its reputation for tolerance and hospitality a long time ago. For years, it has been the place to go from around the region for emergency shelter, free meals, and even shots of hope, some said, from myriad charities and service groups. An accurate count is hard to come by but some of the larger shelters in this city of 107,000 can accommodate up to 200 people a night and are almost always full.

Sergeant Wells said before the arrests that the police thought the slayings of the four homeless men were neither a case of random violence nor the work of a serial killer, and they believed the killings were connected with the scrapping business.

Scrappers in an old rust-belt factory town like South Bend can make hundreds of dollars out of a single haul mining the

mechanical past if, they are crafty and strong enough. Many scrappers team up for added manpower, as the four friends had done.

Some of what scrappers do involves demolition of abandoned property — ripping out pipes and electrical tubing — but often they tread into what is simply theft, the police said. They leave behind aggrieved property owners and, often, face turf wars over territory.

“We have both supply and demand here,” said Capt. Philip A. Trent, a spokesman for the South Bend Police Department. He noted the high number of derelict buildings around town and that there were plenty of people desperate enough to engage in the dangerous, backbreaking work. “Add it all up, and you’ve got a cottage industry — and a profitable one at that.”

The police first interviewed Mr. Sharp on Wednesday and noticed that his boots matched some forensic evidence from the building, Tim Corbett, commander of the St. Joseph County homicide unit told The Associated Press.

Mr. Sharp confessed to the police on Friday that he and Mr. Reeder killed the other men sometime between Dec. 18 and Dec. 21, according to The Associated Press. Forensic evidence in the building confirmed Mr. Sharp’s account, Mr. Corbett said.

While Mr. Lawson, 53, Mr. Nolan, 40, Mr. Talboom, 51, and Mr. Coates, 29, lived on their own, and they were well known among the staff and residents of several local shelters, where they would sometimes stop for food, or to do odd jobs. Over the years, the four had also lived off and on in various shelters.

“I’m just upset. I knew those guys. Good guys, all of them,” said Jim Holleman, who was spending one night last week at the Hope Rescue Mission shelter near downtown.

Just days before they were killed, the men offered what they considered a “guest room” to Matthew Miller, who had been kicked out of a shelter for drinking alcohol. Mr. Miller said he had run into Mr. Lawson at the neighborhood library, where he passed the time on many cold days.

“Mike said: ‘You don’t have to be on the street. Come stay at our building,’ ” Mr. Miller said. “So I did for about three days, then I got back into the shelter. Three days after that, I heard about him being missing.”

Mr. Miller, 30, said he was so distraught by the killings that he could not get out of bed for days, not even to attend the memorial services.

“My anxiety went up so high since then,” he said. “I miss them. And I don’t go places alone after dark by myself like I used to. A lot of people feel that way, they won’t go anywhere around here by themselves anymore.”

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February 2, 2007

## **H.F.A.: 1 OUT OF 7 MICHIGANIANS ON MEDICAID ROLLS**

A new [briefing](#) put out by the House Fiscal Agency reports that Medicaid, the largest state-administered program, includes 15 percent of the population, or 1 out of every seven Michigan resident, on its rolls and now encompasses 25 percent of general fund/general purpose dollars when in the 1990s it accounted for 17.5 percent.

“Based on current national estimates, future Medicaid expenditures are anticipated to grow at an annual rate of 8 percent over the next ten years – more than twice what might be considered the typical 3.5 percent average growth rate of GF/GP revenue in non-recessionary years. If Michigan’s Medicaid costs escalate to the projected national rate during the next decade, the Medicaid program will be difficult to maintain without additional funding and/or major changes in eligibility, benefits, and provider reimbursement levels,” the report, written by HFA Deputy Director Bill Fairgrieve and Senior Fiscal Analyst Steve Stauff, states.

The Medicaid population consists of 75 percent (1.1 million individuals) low-income families, including pregnant women, children and parents or other caretaker relatives, and 25 percent (400,000) of elderly and disabled individuals, many of who reside in community and home-based facilities.

However, low-income families represent only 30 percent of total Medicaid costs.

While Medicaid costs are driven mainly by how many people meet eligibility requirements and are enrolled in the system, the program has seen a significantly higher caseload and subsequent cost during the past six years, the report found. For fiscal years 1995 to 2000, caseloads grew by 6 percent, compared to 33.7 percent for the fiscal years of 2001-2006.

Medicaid expenditures from 1995-2000 grew by 26.8 percent, compared to the 43.9 percent growth experienced from 2001 to 2006.

Actions by the federal government have also affected the Michigan’s Medicaid program, the report states, such as in the 1990s when states were encouraged if not required to expand eligibility to services and increase provider reimbursement rates. In addition to what the federal government requires, Michigan has expanded optional coverage to certain populations at higher income levels, such as pregnant women, children and the elderly or disabled.

At the same time, the federal government has restricted the inventive financing structures that Michigan and other states have used to maximize federal revenue for Medicaid to save general fund/general purpose dollars, generally amounting to \$700 million per year.

“In FY 2005-2006, the GF/GP savings from the various special financing payments were less than \$200 million, and are at risk of further reductions in the future,” the report finds.

The report also outlines what the state has done to pay for increased Medicaid costs without general fund/general purpose dollars for fiscal year 2005-2006 including: using Healthy Michigan Funds to finance the state's share at \$17.1 million, increasing tobacco taxes and designating them to the Medicaid Benefits Trust Fund to the tune of \$379.2 million, establishing provider taxes equaling \$636.8 million and \$142.2 million in general fund savings, designating \$87.8 million from tobacco settlement revenue and maximizing federal revenue for indigent health care through the Medicaid Adult Benefits Waiver equaling \$118.6 million.

The analysis also looked at what cost-savings measures had been implemented by the Department of Community Health. It found that some eligibility and enrollment changes had not been implemented or were pending, on top of establishment of a Medicaid estate recovery program saving \$7.4 million. Provider rate reductions were also partially restored as well.

For fiscal year 2007-2008, the state faces increased pressure to the tune of \$300 million because of Medicaid caseloads and inflation growth, the HFA analysis finds, as well as federally-required "actuarially sound" rates to managed care providers, more use of costly emergency and acute care services, increased uncompensated care by hospitals and lower rates of provider participation.

"It is important to remember that every \$1 spent by the state on Medicaid is matched by \$1.29 from the federal government, so a \$1 state cut to Medicaid is actually a \$2.29 reduction in the Medicaid program," the report states. "A simple or painless "cure" to the Medicaid funding challenge is unlikely to be found. In all probability, a combination of several or all of the above options may be necessary to sustain the Medicaid program over the long term."





This is a printer friendly version of an article from **Lansing State Journal**. To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

Published February 3, 2007

## Something to smile about: LCC dental clinic offers fresh looks for children in need

By Nicole Geary  
Lansing State Journal

"OK, open up big, sweetie," a dental hygienist said as she peered at Amina Abukar's tiny teeth.

The 10-year-old from Somalia needed a thorough cleaning to remove plaque and a filling for one cavity - pretty good for a kid who's never seen a dentist.

She took a short trip from Riddle Elementary School to the Lansing Community College dental clinic Friday and went home as one of 66 students wearing brighter smiles.

With a few hours and a flurry of volunteers, area educators, college students and dentists came together to provide a better health prognosis for local kids whose families can't do it on their own.

"I'm proud of you," Lansing hygienist Gin Wuelfing told Amina during the Give Kids a Smile Day event.

"She's been through a lot, and I'm glad we could help with this one thing to make her life better."

About 70 percent of the kids who received cleanings and repairs Friday are immigrants, some of whom are refugees.

Their parents speak little or no English.



(Photo by ROD SANFORD/Lansing State Journal)  
Great grins: Kelli Bloanca, a Lansing Community College dental hygienist senior, hugs Lexy Kent, 5, during Give Kids a Smile Day on Friday at the college. Above, Jasira Bransford, 8, watches in a mirror as her teeth are brushed.

### Dental partnership

Give Kids a Smile Day 2007 partners:

- The Central District Dental Society
- Lansing Community College Student Dental Hygienists Program
- Lansing School District
- Physicians Health Plan of Mid-Michigan
- Delta Dental Plan of Michigan

### Photo Gallery:

[Give a Kid a Smile Day](#)

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They typically work during the day and don't have the transportation - or the confidence - to get to appointments.

Staff at Riddle, a hub for serving students who don't speak English or come from low-income families, often arrange help with clothing, bedding and other critical needs.

"They probably need food and shelter first," bilingual instruction assistant Nafisa Khogali said.

"Dentists? Forget about it. It's not a survival need."

The dental concerns are great, however.

Last year, Lansing's version of national Give Kids a Smile Day included only screenings and a promise for free follow-up care with participating dentists.

Only a small percentage of parents took advantage of that.

So organizers took things into their own hands. On Friday, they had prearranged treatment plans and supplies to perform all fillings, tooth extractions or more extensive restorations right there.

Many of those who attended needed more than 10 fillings; some had infections. Dentists estimated the services would have cost at least \$23,700, not including more extensive operations some kids needed, in private practice.

Still, only 66 of 120 identified kids returned permission slips.

"It's difficult for many refugee and immigrant families to understand the system," said Bilingual Education Director Sergio Keck.

"But we can't educate a child when the child comes to school with pain in their mouth. We have to look at the whole picture."

And education was very much a part of the experience Friday.

LCC sent home an easy-to-understand brochure with tips for a healthy mouth, and translators planned to call families to discuss the kids' follow-up needs.

Eight-year-old Nicholas Benitez was excited to take home "toothbrush men" stickers to mark a daily chart.

"I learned always do it every day ... twice a day," said Nicholas, who is from Mexico.

"This is fun because I want to be a dentist when I grow up."

Contact Nicole Geary at 377-1066 or [ngeary@lsj.com](mailto:ngeary@lsj.com).



## Bush on health care

Sunday, February 04, 2007

To his credit, President Bush made clear in his recent State of the Union address that he intends to continue proposing serious solutions to serious problems -- one of them being the cost of health care and the number of uninsured Americans.

However, we think he should go back to the drawing board on health care. His proposal is a two-headed beastie. One head looks favorably on those who buy their own health insurance, for 12 million of those citizens would become eligible for tax breaks that could save the average family up to \$3,650 annually. That's the good part. The other head looks with punitive severity at anyone whose employer provides generous health-insurance plans, those that cost the employer \$7,500 or more for an individual or \$15,000 or more for a family. Such employees would be taxed on those benefits, though it is not clear by how much.

While that appears to be a balanced plan, here's the problem: Michigan, where many employees receive better-than-average health-care benefits, could be hit hard by this new "luxury" benefits tax. That punitive policy could result in companies offering lesser benefits so their employees wouldn't get hit hard with a tax.

In a way, the Bush plan buys into the old socialistic notion -- that you should rob the rich to help the poor. In this case, the Bush plan would tax those with generous benefits (not necessarily the "rich", we would point out) and offer relief to the uninsured who are willing to buy their own insurance (could the "poor" afford it?).

We're glad to start the national debate on health-insurance, even with a questionable proposal like this. Does anyone out there have a better idea -- Hillary Clinton perhaps?

--Jackson Citizen Patriot

Monday: A dim-witted option?

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# Parents' rights group supports father in fight for visitation rights

By: Khalil AlHajal / The Arab American News

Dearborn — A local parents' rights group has pledged its support for a Jordanian American who filed a federal lawsuit in January against the Michigan Department of Human Services.

The lawsuit, filed by Abraham Ben-Abbad, alleges that the Department of Human Services has denied him the right to see his daughter despite explicit visitation rights granted to him in court. Ben-Abbad claims that the Department has worked with a local church to drive his daughter, Hend Almanasir, 13, away from her Muslim heritage.

Parents for Children, a Dearborn-based group that advocates throughout Michigan for parents who have had children removed from their care, say that they have organized protests in front of courthouses in various counties and have seen children returned to their parents as a result. The group met with Ben-Abbad on Tuesday and expressed their support, even considering preparations for a possible demonstration.

"We hope that parents from all over Michigan will rally behind this brave parent and his fight for his religious beliefs," the group said in a statement released after the meeting.

Ben-Abbad said that the Department of Human Services, and in particular a caseworker named William McDonald, had been deceptive and underhanded throughout his battle for contact with his daughter.

Parents for Children members said they were very familiar with deceitful tactics used by Children's Protection Services workers in child custody cases.

"If you don't know the game that you're playing, it's very easy for them to not play fair," said Kristy Schley, a Parents for Children organizer from Mackinac who had three children removed from her custody and then returned to her soon after a demonstration staged by the group.

Schley and other members of the organization believe that government workers involved in custody cases are compromised by bonuses that they receive whenever children are removed from homes for abuse or neglect.

"I call it the foster care industry," said attorney Janet Frederick-Wilson, who also works with Parents for Children.

She said that grants that agencies receive and performance bonuses that agents are given have caused unnecessary breakups of many families.

"And we think that minorities have been disproportionately picked-on."

Ben-Abbad was accused of abuse by his ex-wife and authorities have refused to follow court orders to allow him to visit with his daughter.

He said that he hasn't spoken to his daughter since July 19, 2006, that court proceedings have already cost him tens of thousands of dollars, and that there has been suspicious involvement in the case by a Dearborn church with openly anti-Muslim convictions.

"I don't want any other family to go through this," said Ben-Abbad.

"I'm not giving up. I'm fighting them all the way."

A spokesperson for the Department of Human Services said that she could not comment on the specifics of the lawsuit, but that "any issues of religious preference are taken seriously by the Department and by our Children's Services staff."

Local news in brief

*February 5, 2007*

## **DETROIT: Run to raise cash to help with heat bills**

The City of Detroit and the Heat and Warmth Fund (THAW) are sponsoring the third annual Heat the Streets Run on Saturday to raise money for low-income families who need help paying their winter utility bills.

Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick will be the grand marshal for the 10K run and 5K walk. The race is to begin at 8 a.m. on Broadway south of John R in front of the Boll Family YMCA, and wind through downtown Detroit.

Registration fees range from \$10 to \$25 and all contributions will be matched by DTE Energy, the Michigan Public Service Commission and other sponsors.

In the past, the event has raised more than \$200,000 and helped almost 150 families.

Interested runners or volunteers can register online at [www.heatthestreets.org](http://www.heatthestreets.org) or call the Department of Human Services at 313-887-1100. Low-income residents can apply for assistance by calling 313-852-5634.

Compiled by Zlati Meyer, Suzette Hackney and Marisol Bello.



## Walk to help people pay their heating bills

Annual fund-raiser is also family fun event

February 4, 2007

BY BILL LAITNER

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

It's cold outside this time of year, but chilly as well inside some people's houses.

They're the low-income families and individuals in Oakland County who need help paying their heating bills.

To help them, generous folks have turned out for 16 years in the annual Walk for Warmth, a fund-raiser that's returning on Feb. 17 from 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

The non-competitive walk, this year at the Palace of Auburn Hills, features children's activities, clowns, music and food. Prizes will go to the individual, runner-up and team that raise the most money, with a grand prize of \$500 to spend at Travelocity. Another prize will go to the team that raises the most, on average, per person.

Last year, the walk brought in more than \$165,000 and helped 267 Oakland County households. An average of \$618 per household was provided to help pay heating bills, said Ron Borngesser, chief executive officer of Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency, based in Pontiac. (A separate event will be held for Livingston County, on Feb. 24 in Howell.)

Of the households helped last year, 47% included children 17 and younger, Borngesser said. As for the adults who received home-heating aid, many of them "only need this one-time assistance to get them back on their feet again."

Despite early winter's largely mild temperatures, he said, "people are indeed still struggling. We're getting calls every day."

Part of the reason has been the steady climb in energy costs, whose rate of increase has outstripped that of most other daily living costs, he said.

To recruit this year's flock of walkers, the Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency is seeking businesses, civic organizations, schools and churches to participate as teams with two or more walkers.

According to agency spokeswoman Jessica Valascho, the two major sponsors of this year's walk are T&C Federal Credit Union, which has nine branches in Oakland County (including one in Rochester Hills), and General Motors Corp., whose Oakland County employees have traditionally been enthusiastic participants. In 2006, the credit union's employees raised more than \$20,000 at the Walk for Warmth, Valascho said.

But many smaller companies send employees and donations year after year, including the Troy-based law firm Bowen, Radabaugh & Milton.

Attorney Lisa Milton said she got involved because her mother-in-law, Corenna Aldrich, is a longtime Walk for Warmth volunteer.

"It's a fun family event. They have a lot of things for kids to do," said Milton, whose children are Jimmy Aldrich, 10, and Carrie Aldrich, 9. "We don't really have a team. Just whoever can go, goes."

For more about Walk for Warmth, call 248-209-2623 anytime or go to [www.olhsa.org/walkforwarmth](http://www.olhsa.org/walkforwarmth) to register online. Contact **BILL LAITNER** at 248-351-3297.



## Walks offer warmth

Monday, February 05, 2007

WEST MICHIGAN -- Kent, Ottawa and Muskegon counties are teaming up to keep West Michigan families warm this winter. "Walk for Warmth," which takes place in each county at 9 a.m. Feb. 17, will raise money for utility assistance to poor families. The three-mile Kent County walk begins at Area Community Services Employment and Training Council West Side complex at 215 Straight Ave. NW, Grand Rapids. Contact: 366-4113, [www.acset.org](http://www.acset.org). The Ottawa County walk begins at Holland Civic Center, 150 W 8th St. Contact: 393-5697, [www.miottawa.org/caa](http://www.miottawa.org/caa). The Muskegon walk is at Lakes Mall. Contact: (231) 733-7692.

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Published February 4, 2007  
[ From Towne Courier ]

**Fox named vice chair of CTF of Michigan**

Anita G. Fox of Okemos has been elected to serve as vice chair of the Children's Trust Fund of Michigan (CTF) Board for 2007. Fox was appointed to the Board of Directors by Governor Jennifer M. Granholm in 2004.

CTF provides grants for public education, training and technical assistance, and funds a network of local, community-based child abuse prevention programs and services across the state.

Fox is a shareholder with the law firm of Fraser Trebilcock Davis & Dunlap, P.C.



**ourMidland.com**  
from the Midland Daily News

02/04/2007

## Barley helps mom find apartment

EDITOR'S NOTE – The Barley MacTavish Fund accepts letters from readers about themselves or other people, explaining why they need help and what they have tried to do about their problems. Write to Barley, care of the Midland Daily News, at P.O. Box 432, Midland, MI 48640 , and be sure to include a telephone number.

There is no real Barley MacTavish. This fund was established by an anonymous donor and is being continued with private financial support, plus donations from area residents during the holiday season. The project has been undertaken to help make Midland a little better place to live.

**Dear Mr. MacTavish,**

I am a single mother and am writing to you today to try to get some help in getting a home. To help you understand, I have to take you back a few years. After I was married, everything was great. We seemed to be living the American dream. All that came to a crashing halt when my husband announced he was leaving me and walked out the door. We stayed in our home for a short period, but then the kids and I moved into a different place and life began again.

It wasn't great, but it was affordable. Unfortunately, that was followed by a bad marriage that left me with a heap of debt. I sold everything that I could to pay things off and there was no money left. The children and I moved in with relatives, but we need to get a place of our own. I have had the same job for almost four years and this is the first time I have had to ask for cash assistance from the Department of Human Services.

I also receive Food Stamps and child support from my first husband.

I can afford monthly rent, but am having a hard time getting a security deposit and first month's rent to get started. My family can't help me with money, but they do a great deal in caring for my children. I would appreciate any help you can give us to get us started again.

**Dear Friend,**

I agree that it's generally best for families to have a place of their own, so I'm sending \$350 to help you move into an apartment. I hope it buys your children some stability.

*©Midland Daily News 2007*

## **Jones Wants House To Investigate State Overspending**

MIRS, Friday, February 2, 2007

Rep. Rick **JONES** (R-Grand Ledge) asked the House Oversight and Investigations Committee today to conduct hearings and further investigate why three state departments overran their budget's last year.

In a letter to committee chair Rep. Steve **TOBOCMAN** (D-Detroit), Jones said the committee should see why the departments of Corrections, Human Services and State Police were delayed in reporting the "unconstitutional expenditures" in Fiscal Year (FY) 2006.

Jones made note of former State Budget Director Mary **LANNOYE**'s response during a House Appropriations Committee hearing in December that she wasn't aware of the cost over-run in September, however Jones supplied four pieces of paperwork that he claims proves otherwise.

He said the Department of Human Services (DHS) on Aug. 6 asked for a \$1.6 million transfer for juvenile justice facilities. The State Police on Sept. 8 froze expenditures for all agencies and offices. DHS and the Department of Corrections (DOC) made transfer requests on Sept. 11 and State Police procurement cards were cancelled Sept. 12.

"Yet, even given all of the above, there is no Section 371 notification to the appropriations chairs until November 21," Jones wrote. "Being generous, I count that as 70 days after the problem arose. A delay of 70 days cannot seriously be considered as 'immediate.'"

Jones noted that during those 70 days, a gubernatorial election had been held, insinuating maybe that had something to do with the lack of notification.

"It would be of benefit to all citizens of this state, however, if we could put to rest the question of whether the delay was politically motivated," Jones wrote. "Citizens' concerns over the issue might be connected to the fact that a willful neglect of a public officer's duty is a misdemeanor."

Jones added the problem isn't that the budgets were going over its allotted amount. He said the lack of notification is the problem.

But it doesn't look like any further investigations are forthcoming. Democrats note that a hearing in the House and Senate appropriations committees have been held and the questions surrounding the over run have been addressed.

"Sounds like a lot of political posturing," said House Majority Spokesman Dan **FAROUGH**. "Sounds like Rep. Jones is turning the budget into political ping pong, and that won't create a single job. It won't keep police and firefighters on our streets and won't keep fund our schools."



For the week ending 2/2/2007, Vol. XXVIII, No. 5

- [House Passes Continuing Resolution with Changes in Medicaid, OAA, and WIA Programs](#)
- [Senate Passes Minimum Wage Increase](#)
- [Administration Would Rename Food Stamp Program, Change Benefits, and Impose New State Penalties and Restrictions](#)
- [Senate Agriculture Committee Holds Hearing on Nutrition Programs](#)
- [Senate Finance Committee Convenes Hearing on SCHIP](#)
- [GAO Releases High-Risk Series, Includes Medicaid Program](#)

### **House Passes Continuing Resolution with Changes in Medicaid, OAA, and WIA Programs**

On January 31, the House voted 286-140 to approve a \$463.5 billion fiscal year 2007 omnibus appropriations spending bill. Although most programs will be funded at FY 2006 levels, the continuing resolution (CR) proposes to increase funding for federally qualified health centers by approximately \$207 million, bringing total funding to \$1.9 billion. The increase will help finance more than 300 new or expanded health centers. Within this total, \$25 million is allocated for base adjustments for existing health centers. The CR funds Ryan White CARE Grants at approximately \$1.2 billion, an increase of \$75.8 million; the increase will help states that are disadvantaged by the new formula in the reauthorized program. The CR also has an increase of \$495 million for the Public Health and Social Services Emergency programs, which include hospital preparedness grants, bioterrorism training and curriculum development, and credentialing/emergency systems for advance registration of volunteer health professionals. The CR would also increase funding to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) by \$52 million to prevent shutting down the 1-800-MEDICARE call centers for the final months of the fiscal year and \$15.9 billion for the Real Choice Systems Change Grants for states.

The CR also modifies the Older Americans Act Elderly Meal Programs by providing a \$20 million increase for Meals on Wheels and other senior nutrition programs. The amount would restore last year's across-the-board cut and provide a small increase to offset inflation and a growing elderly population. Finally, the CR places a prohibition on funds being used to finalize or implement proposed Workforce Investment Act (WIA) or Wagner-Peyser Act regulations. Last month, the Department of Labor released a proposed rule that makes policy changes to WIA and Wagner-Peyser regulations. This rule shifts some of the decision-making responsibilities of the program up to the state level; requires full collaboration between WIA One-Stops and Wagner-Peyser services; removes the requirement that Wagner-Peyser services be provided by "merit employees"; makes changes to the WIA board membership, functions, and planning processes; eliminates the higher standard of review for certain waiver requests; opens up Individual Training Accounts to youth ages 16-17 and the role of "alternative entities" with youth councils; and formalizes the process of intermediaries and sub-contractors. The Senate is expected to approve the bill next week; the current CR expires February 15.

### **Senate Passes Minimum Wage Increase**

On February 1, the Senate passed legislation to increase the minimum wage while providing tax relief to small businesses. The legislation follows a proposal passed by the House on January 10. Both bills increase the minimum wage by \$2.10 over a two-year period. There would be three incremental increases leading up to the final increase to \$7.25 an hour. However, the Senate also included legislation that passed the Finance Committee last week that provides \$7 billion in tax incentives to small businesses. The bill, the Small Business and Work Opportunity Act of 2007 (H.R. 2), includes an extension of the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC), which includes the Welfare to Work Tax Credit, through 2012. It also expands the qualifications for certain target populations of the WOTC, including High Risk Youths and Service-Injured Veterans. The cost of the extension and expansion is estimated at \$1.8 billion over a five-year period. House leaders have expressed concerns over attaching tax legislation to the minimum wage increase. Until an agreement can be reached between the two chambers, the legislation will remain in the Senate and will not be sent to the House.

### **Administration Would Rename Food Stamp Program, Change Benefits, and Impose New State Penalties and Restrictions**

On January 31, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced its proposals for reauthorizing the farm bill, which expires September 30. In the section on nutrition programs, the USDA proposed a number of Food Stamp Program (FSP) changes, including exclusion of retirement savings accounts and the value of Internal Revenue Service-approved college savings plans from the resource limit; elimination of the cap on the dependent care deduction; and exclusion of combat-related military pay from income. The USDA also recommends a new name for the program, the "Food and Nutrition Program." The USDA also is proposing to limit categorical eligibility to those households that receive only Temporary Assistance for Needy Families or Supplemental Security Income cash benefits; the administration has proposed this change in previous years, and APHSA's policy opposes the change. The USDA is also proposing three changes that would affect state quality control and claims activities. The USDA would first charge states 5 percent of their administrative costs if the state is more than 50 percent above the national negative error rate for two consecutive years. Second, the agency would remove the new investment option for states sanctioned for improper payments for three consecutive years; states would have to pay their "at-risk" amount for the second year as well as the entire third-year liability amount. Third, the USDA proposes to prohibit states from establishing and collecting claims from recipients for state-caused overissuances resulting from widespread systemic errors, such as large-scale automated system problems. States would be liable to the federal government for the overissued benefits. Details of the FSP proposals, as well as proposals for other federal nutrition programs, are available at <http://www.usda.gov/documents/07title4.doc>.

### **Senate Agriculture Committee Holds Hearing on Nutrition Programs**

On January 31, the full Senate Agriculture Committee held a hearing on federal nutrition programs, including the FSP. Committee Chair Tom Harkin (D-Iowa) and Ranking Member Saxby Chambliss (R-Ga.) led the discussion. Other senators who participated included Sherrod Brown

(D-Ohio), Thad Cochran (R-Miss.), Blanche Lincoln (D-Ark.), and Ken Salazar (D-Colo.). Sens. Harkin and Chambliss cited the FSP's good record in recent years in serving recipients and lowering errors, but said refinements are needed. Harkin said he is concerned about ways to promote consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables in the FSP, and is seeking ideas on how to offer participants incentives to do so. Chambliss recommended exclusion of military pay from countable income, higher asset limits, and broader use of the web for obtaining application and recertification information. Witnesses included Sigurd Nielsen of the Government Accountability Office (GAO), who reviewed the FSP's recent record of low errors and improved trafficking results. He attributed the low error rate to states' use of simplified reporting and their intensified focus on good administrative practices. He noted that incorrect payments are still high in dollar terms but that further progress will not be easy without further simplification of program rules. The full text of the GAO statement is available at [here](#). Robert Greenstein, director of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, testified that the FSP should be streamlined and simplified so that more members of underserved groups, such as the elderly, could participate. He also advocated liberalized eligibility rules for legal immigrants and single adults and several benefit increases, including a higher asset limit and an increase in the minimum benefit. Other witnesses included a number of representatives from anti-hunger groups and a program recipient. More details on testimony at the hearing are available [here](#).

#### **Senate Finance Committee Convenes Hearing on SCHIP**

On February 1, the Senate Finance Committee held a hearing on the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). The committee is chaired by Sen. Max Baucus (D-Mont.), and the ranking member is Sen. Charles Grassley (R-Iowa). Called "The Future of CHIP: Improving Health Care for America's Children," the hearing examined the successes and challenges of the 10-year-old program. Testimony was provided by Georgia Gov. Sonny Purdue (R), Anita Smith of the Iowa Medicaid agency, Cindy Mann of Georgetown University, and Kathryn J. Allen of the GAO. The focus of the testimony was on funding issues and flexibility for states. Purdue discussed the reliability of financing, and Smith highlighted to importance of state flexibility in designing the programs. She also drew attention to funding challenges, and noted that the SCHIP funding formula penalizes states that are successful in reducing the number of uninsured children without recognizing the state's progress in reducing those numbers. The full GAO testimony, Children's Health Insurance: State Experiences in Implementing SCHIP and Considerations for Reauthorization (GAO-07-447T), is available [here](#). The Finance Committee has jurisdiction over the SCHIP program, which is up for reauthorization by Congress this year. Testimony from the hearing is available at [this location](#).

#### **GAO Releases High-Risk Series, Includes Medicaid Program**

On January 31, the GAO released its High-Risk Series, a report to Congress on federal programs that are high-risk as a result of their vulnerabilities to fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement. The Medicaid program was designated as high-risk in 2003. Although the GAO found that Congress and the CMS have taken steps to improve Medicaid's fiscal integrity and financial management, the program remains high-risk due to concerns in three main areas: financing methods, waiver programs, and billing. The GAO noted concern over financing methods that leverage federal funds inappropriately, waiver programs that inappropriately increase the federal government's liability, and inappropriate billing by providers. Recommendations from the GAO have not yet been acted upon by Congress, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, or the CMS. The High-Risk Series report is available online [here](#).